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EXCISE

9024
July 12, 1966
9:55 a.m.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Lynch DATE 10/6/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED
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VV MJA827SPA020
PP RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 816 1931330
ZNY CCCCC
P R 121310Z
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/PRIORITY
INFO RUHLHQ/CINCPAC
RUMMNF/C3 MAF III
RUMNVH/AMCONSUL HUE
STATE GRNC
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 816

JULY 12.

CG MAF III FOR POLAD DANANG 17

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: SAIGON 445

SUBJECT: ALL-RELIGIONS CITIZENS' FRONT

1. SENT WORD TO EVENING JULY 11 ASKING HIM TO MEET MORNING JULY 12. INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE MADE CERTAIN BEFOREHAND THAT TIME SET FOR INTERVIEW DID NOT COINCIDE WITH TIMING SCHEDULED PRESS CONFERENCE AT WHICH FRONT INTENDED MAKE PUBLIC COMMUNIQUE ATTACKING ELECTIONS.

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2. ARRIVED LATE FOR APPOINTMENT, APOLOGIZING THAT HE HAD BEEN CONVOKED BY

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HE DID NOT ALLUDE FURTHER TO THIS MEETING OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED PRESS CONFERENCE WITH

3. HANDED WELL-PREPARED BROCHURE WHICH WOULD BE CIRCULATED AT PRESS CONFERENCE. IT CONSISTED OF A COPY OF THE COMMUNIQUE (IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE), A DETAILED CRITIQUE OF THE ELECTION LAW (IN BOTH LANGUAGES), AN ATTACK ON GVN FOR ITS FAILURE TO CONTROL AND CONTAIN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION (IN VIETNAMESE ONLY). THERE WAS ALSO A RATHER ELABORATELY PRINTED BOOKLET (IN BOTH VIETNAMESE AND ENGLISH) CONTAINING TEXTS OF EARLIER COMMUNIQUES OF THE BODY, RESUME OF ITS RECENT ACTIVITIES, AND PHOTOS AND CURRICULA VITAE OF THE OFFICERS. SPOKESMAN

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FOR GROUP AND IS LONG-TIME COLLABORATOR [redacted] TOLD [redacted] b-1 ed THAT GROUP'S ACTIVITIES WERE ALL OPEN AND ABOVE BOARD. IN KEEPING WITH THIS POLICY, THEY WISHED TO GIVE [redacted] ADVANCE NOTICE AS TO CONTENTS OF BROCHURE AND LINE THEY INTENDED TO TAKE AT PRESS CONFERENCE.

4. AFTER SCANNING COMMUNIQUE AND CRITIQUE, [redacted] ASKED [redacted] WHAT HAD INSPIRED GROUP TO GO ON RECORD WITH THREE RESOLUTIONS RECORDED IN COMMUNIQUE: "1) TO REJECT AND BOYCOTT THE COMING ELECTION OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY HELD BY THE NGUYEN-CAO-KY GOVERNMENT; 2) TO DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE FORMATION OF

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A PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED BY THE PEOPLE TO BRING ABOUT NATIONAL UNITY AND TAKE CHARGE OF THE ELECTION OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY; 3) TO APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE AND THE ARMY TO STAND UNITED TO ACHIEVE THE NOBLE MISSION OF DEFEATING THE COMMUNISTS AND TO SAFEGUARD THE COUNTRY." HE OBSERVED THAT IF GROUP HAD SPECIFIC PROBLEMS WITH ELECTORAL LAW IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN MORE TO THE POINT TO DISCUSS THEM FIRST WITH GVN BEFORE ADOPTING PUBLIC, INFLEXIBLE ATTITUDE. [redacted] b-1 ed RESPONDED THAT THEY COULD NOT TRUST GOVERNMENT, ELECTIONS CONDUCTED UNDER PRESENT LAW WOULD BE WORSE THAN THOSE OF THE DIEM ERA (WHICH HE AND [redacted] HAD OPPOSED). [redacted] SUGGESTED THAT VALUE JUDGMENTS OF THIS SORT WERE PREMATURE. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IF MEN OF TALENT AND GOOD WILL PARTICIPATED FREELY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND WERE ELECTED AS MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, A PROMISING FIRST STEP ON THE PATH TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN. HE THEN ASKED ABOUT RESOLUTION NUMBER 2. WHO WOULD FORM A "PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT?" OBVIOUS ANSWER WAS THAT THE ALL RELIGIONS CITIZENS' FRONT COULD PERFORM THE TASK. [redacted] THEN WENT OVER LIST OF SIGNERS OF COMMUNIQUE:

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THE UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH: THE VENERABLE THICH-PHAP-TRI, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE BUDDHIST INSTITUTE. THE CATHOLIC GROUP: THE REVEREND HOANG QUYNH, CHAIRMAN OF THE RELIGIOUS CITIZENS FRONT, TRAN VAN THAT, MEMBER, PHAM HIEU THUAN, MEMBER CAO DAI; LE VAN TAI, LE TRUNG NGHIA; HOA HAO; TRINH QUOC VHANH, LAM THANH NGUYEN; GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF BUDDHISTS: PHAN VAN TRINH; PROTESTANT GROUP; LUAONG VAN THUC, DAO THANH LONG; NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL; LAN VAN TET, 1ST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, PHAN BA CAM, SECRETARY GENERAL, LE VINH, MEMBER; VNQDD SOUTHERN CHAPTER; NGUYEN HOA HIEP, CHAIRMAN; REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF THE SAIGON STUDENTS CONGRESS; NGUYEN HUU DUNG, VO VAN DUNG; NATIONAL COALITION FRONT: NGUYEN THANH YEN, SECRETARY GENERAL. SUGGESTING THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF [redacted] REST WERE

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WELL-KNOWN OUT POLITICANS WHO REPRESENTED NO ONE BUT THEM- b-1 ed
SELVES. [redacted] SMILED SOMEWHAT SHEEPISHLY, ARGED WITHOUT
REAL CONVICTION THAT THESE FIGURES REPRESENTED MAJORITY
OF VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. DISCUSSION CONTINUED FOR SOME TIME BUT IT
WAS OBVIOUS THAT [redacted] COULD NOT RETREAT FROM COMMITMENT TO
HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE. [redacted] DID PROMISE, HOWEVER, THAT AFTER
SETTING THEIR POSITION CLEARLY ON THE RECORD THEY DID NOT INTEND
TO FOLLOW UP WITH DEMONSTRATIONS. [redacted] SAID THEY WERE NOT
INTEREUIED IN CREATING POLITICAL TURMOIL. LODGE
BT

Advance copy to S/S-O at 10:19 a.m. 7/12/66
Passed to White House, DOD, CIA, USIA & NSA at 10:19 a.m. 7/12/66

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